SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, do you want such a certificate?

SHRI RAHUL BAJAJ: Brindaji should not interrupt me, Sir, because she is such a senior Member. Sir, because of this huge stock, which is very difficult to store, I request the hon. Minister to use his good offices with the Government of the United States, which is, I must say with all responsibility, Sir, shamefully protecting its agriculture by high tariff walls, by production support and by export subsidy. Will he try, if he wants to export, to use his good offices with the Government of United States to prevent their artificial support to their very high cost agricultural products?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: You see, it is true that too much stock is a problem for this country today. Then, secondly, whatever the latest report of the second advanced crop of wheat is also quite comfortable. It is somewhat near to last year. Whatever price the Government of India has announced this year, all wheat-producing States' report, which has been received in my Ministry, is that we should be ready to procure more than last year. In fact, last year's procurement was one of the highest procurements in the last 60 years, and, probably, this year, we will procure more. So, in such a situation, we have started giving serious thought what to do with this and how to dispose it. In fact, two years back, the country was facing shortage, and that is why we had introduced some of the restrictions. The restrictions were such that we had practically opened import without any duty. The second decision which we had taken long back was that we had stopped export of wheat products outside India. Thirdly, we introduced stock limits just to see that there will not be hoarding or any other situation. Now, we have received many representations from various organisations that if the availability is a problem today, storage is a problem, the Government should try to remove all these restrictions which had been introduced since two years back. And, that particular proposal is before us to take a final view, and I am sure that we will be able to take some view on all these issues within ten days' time.

Pressure of passengers at railway stations

84. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the strength of daily railway passengers from Agartala to Dharmanagar is exceedingly high and beyond the present in-take capacity of the trains;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the ticket booking system prior to departure of the trains at Agartala and other major stations cannot cope with the pressure of passengers; and

(c) if so, the remedy for the solution of the problems outlined above?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI. R. VELU): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) At the current level of passenger traffic between Agartala and Dharmanagar, the existing number of trains are considered adequate.

(b) The number of counters available at the stations on Dharmanagar- Agartala section are adequate keeping in view the number of tickets currently being sold at these stations.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, I am really astonished to see how the reality has been ignored by the hon. Minister in his reply. He has totally denied the bare truth. Sir, the hon. Minister responded to the demand of the people of Tripura by introducing train service to Agartala. Sir, I am thankful to the hon. Minister for that. But, what is the position now? There is a heavy rush of passengers, which compels a fraction of the passengers to return from the station. Sir, the authorities are increasing the number of coaches, day-after-day. However, the people cannot undertake journey from Agartala in the morning, which is the demand from the side of the passengers. Sir, advanced booking is not allowed and booking is allowed only on the eve of the arrival of the train. The services are not properly manned for want of staff.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put your question.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, I am coming to the question. The services are not manned all through properly due to shortage of staff. So, in this scenario, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government will provide one more train from Agartala to Dharmanagar in the morning, which will return from Dharmanagar to Agartala in the afternoon, and the system of advanced booking be introduced with the system of computerisation very soon.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, the hon. Member should be very happy because Agartala is the second capital of the State which is connected by the Railways after Assam.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: I thanked you for that.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: After how many years? 50 years! ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do not interrupt. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI R. VELU: I agree with you that this project was commenced way back in 1996-97. After twelve long years, it is completed by August last year. It was commissioned on 5.10.2008 with a capital cost of Rs.880 crores and the distance is about 109 kilometres. Why has it happened? Because this Government had declared it a national project and made available the required funds and we completed it. The question is about increase in train services. In fact, when we commissioned this project, we introduced only two trains. We realised the fact that a number of persons are not being accommodated, one more train was introduced in the next month itself, in November. The hon. Member is asking why not introduce one more train? Sir, the area is declared as militancy-affected area and the Government of Tripura has said that we cannot run trains between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. That being the case, I will not be able to introduce one more train, because I start the train at 12 o'clock from Agartala. I get the train from Silcher, from Badarpur. Then only I restart the train in the reverse direction. In fact, I am willing to do it. But, how do we run when we are told that we cannot run the train? That is one thing.

Secondly, there is no maintenance facility in Agartala. I maintain at Silcher and Badarpur and bring the train, that is another technical problem. The third thing is, when the people return, there is no service facility. Sir, I have got now, in each station, counters open. In Badarpur, I got two counters, in Agartala, I have already made three counters and promising him one more counter

which would be inaugurated. The number of passengers today commuting is only 3,500 whereas the capacity available is 4,500. There is excess capacity available.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Now, the second supplementary.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, as regards the answer to the first supplementary, I would like to make one point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry, please ask the second supplementary.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Okay, Sir, I am asking that. The thing is that there is no restriction from the State Government to have a train in the morning from Agartala and in the afternoon from Dharmanagar; there is no restriction from the State Government. What the Minister is saying is not true. Sir, about 50 per cent of the Railways in the North-East consists of meter-gauge. The people of Tripura who want to journey by train are facing great trouble because they do not have broad-gauge from Agartala to Lumding. They are unable to make the good use of their train journey from Tripura to Assam, for want of broad-gauge. On the last occasion also, I raised this question in this House. There is not even the slightest development after my intervention in the last occasion. Will the Railway Minister assure the House that the line of conversion to broad-gauge in Tripura would be completed as per the schedule?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please answer just the question.

SHRI R. VELU : Sir, though it is not a relevant question, I will answer it because he is very much annoyed and he says that it has not been done. From Lumding to Silcher, we are willing to consider introducing Railways, but 7 p.m. onwards, the kind of things that happen are dangerous. Last time also I have answered that we have lost 52 people; they were killed. As much as 11 engineers have been killed. The State Government is not willing to come forth with the kind of security required. Now on our insistence they are willing to give one battalion of one thousand personnel. There is a tunnel of about 10 kms. of which we have done about only 4 kms. One tunnel is of 3 kms. where the contractors run away because of this problem. In fact, we are willing to do it. We want to do it by 2009 but now we are pushing it for 2010. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री बिश्वजीत दैमारी: वे कहते हैं कि वहां पर समस्या के कारण ...**(व्यवधान)**... नॉर्थ ईस्ट के बारे में ही बार-बार ऐसा क्यों कहते हैं? ...**(व्यवधान)**...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do not interrupt. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री बिश्वजीत दैमारी: इंडिया में दूसरी जगह पर भी ऐसा हो रहा है, वहां पर क्यों नहीं बंद किया? ...**(व्यवधान)**...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do not interrupt. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री बिश्वजीत दैमारी: यहां के बारे में क्यों ...**(व्यवधान)**...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member, please resume your place. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री बिश्वजीत दैमारी: वहां पर नक्सलवाद की जो समस्या है, उसका समाधान करने के लिए गवर्नमेंट को ...**(व्यवधान)**... इसी वजह से जो मेन ...**(व्यवधान)**...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please resume your place. ...*(Interruptions)*... This will not go on record. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री बिश्वजीत दैमारी: *

MR. CHAIRMAN: This will not go on record. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please resume your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री बिश्वजीत दैमारी: *

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please continue. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री बिश्वजीत दैमारी: *

SHRI R. VELU: I started my answer by saying that this Government is willing to help the North-Eastern States. Even earlier also I said that we are having 9 national projects in the North-Eastern Region. We are going to invest Rs.10,000 crores there in the next five years. Out of Rs.9000 crores allotted to the country, we are going to allot Rs.1000 crores there alone. In fact, about what he is saying, we took the matter to the Cabinet and a decision was taken and now they have decided that one battalion of Territorial Army of 1000 personnel can be recruited. But at my cost, that being the case, we are willing to convert the Lamding-Silchar and give the kind of passage without transhipment at Silchar.

श्री शिवानन्द तिवारी: मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं कि जब सर्ला की तरह कई छोटे-छोटे स्टेशनों पर यात्रियों की भीड़ होती है तो सबसे ज्यादा परेशानी बुकिंग काउंटर पर होती है। वहां लम्बी-लम्बी लाइनें लग जाती हैं, गाड़ी के आने का समय हो जाता है और पैसेंजर्स को बिना टिकट ट्रेन पर सवारी करनी पड़ती है। इस तरह से जो भी स्टेशंस हैं, क्या उनका सर्वेक्षण करवाकर उनके टिकट काउंटर को बढ़ाने की कोई योजना मंत्रालय की है या नहीं, यह मैं जानना चाहता हूं।

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, first of all, there are 12 stations, 6 block stations and 6 small stations. In all the stations we have facility for issuing tickets either by the commercial staff or the Assistant Station Masters now. That being the case, the position is that for Dharmanagar the average is about 311 people for which we have two counters, one PRO is also available. In fact, the UT is also available. I am going to convert all the stations into UTs to help them to buy tickets three days in advance. In all the places we have already one counter available, staff is available and the average is that one can issue 800 tickets whereas here the average is 300, 182, 469, 14, 337, etc. That being the case there is no question of passengers returning or passengers travelling without tickets.

DR. K. KESHAVA RAO: Sir, the agony of the hon. Member has to be understood. What we are asking the Minister to state is that suppose we do not have sufficient security forces or whatever forces, would the work stop at that level? Suppose a State Government is not cooperating or it falls short of the forces, what would the Ministry do? Will it stop the development activity? That is the anguish of the Member.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, law and order is the subject of State. In fact, in this case though the State Government is not willing to fund the kind of security, we say that for one thousand personnel, the Railways would undertake to fund this kind of expenditure involved. It is not that we are going to drop this as a hot potato. We wanted to see that the schemes are implemented whatever may be cost. So, I assure the hon. Member that in these cases though there will be law and order problem, we are trying to sort out, and with a security cover we are going ahead with development work.

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* Not recorded